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Data Sought on NSC-Rebel Contacts

Rep. Barnes Asks for Papers on Officer's Nicaragua Activities

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Rep. Michael D. Barnes (D-Md.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Western Hemisphere affairs, asked the White House yesterday to turn over all documents relating to contacts between Marine Lt. Col. Oliver L. North of the National Security Council staff and leaders of the rebels fighting the government of Nicaragua.

In a letter to Robert C. McFarlane, President Reagan's national security affairs adviser, Barnes said published reports about North's activities "raise serious questions regarding the violation of the letter

and spirit of U.S. law prohibiting support for the Nicaraguan rebels."

Saying he seeks "to clarify the circumstances surrounding Lt. Col. North's activities," Barnes asked McFarlane to provide Congress with "all information including all memoranda and any other documents" regarding North's contacts with rebel leaders since the law banning support was passed last October.

Reports in The Washington Post and The New York Times described North as the center of an information and referral network that maintained ties among the rebels, administration officials and leaders of the New Right who provided financial and political support to the

counterrevolutionaries, or contras. The Post identified North by name; The Times did not.

North is one of four NSC staff members with responsibility for Latin and Central America. Adolfo Calero, head of the largest Nicaraguan contra group, has said he has met frequently with all four.

Administration officials have argued that the law barred any "entity of the United States government involved in intelligence activities" from supporting the rebels but that the clause did not apply to the National Security Council.

Barnes disagreed. "It would be stretching the integrity of the law to suggest that this prohibition was not intended to cover the NSC," Barnes wrote. "President Reagan himself in his executive order on the nation's intelligence agencies describes the NSC as the highest government entity with responsibility for intelligence activities."

Barnes noted that the so-called Boland amendment barred U.S. aid "for the purpose, or which would have the effect, of supporting directly or indirectly military or paramilitary operations" of the Nicaraguan insurgents.

North's activities "clearly have 'the effect of supporting' the Nicaraguan rebel movement," Barnes wrote. "The press reports suggest that, despite congressional intent during this period, direct U.S. support was provided to the Nicaraguan rebels."

Earlier this week, Common Cause asked the House and Senate intelligence committees to investigate NSC involvement with the rebels "to ensure the accountability of the executive branch to the Congress."

Common Cause President Fred Wertheimer also asked them to make public the way that \$27 million in new humanitarian aid to the rebels will be administered "to ensure that the aid is not used for military purposes."